



Speech by

## Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

---

Hansard 24 August 1999

### QUEENSLAND HEALTH

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.09 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the Minister for Health. Let us get this really clear even to the extent that it will be understood by the Opposition spokesperson and the honourable former Minister, the member for Burnett. The Queensland public health system is not for sale. I repeat: it is not for sale. I do not know which part of that the member for Maroochydore fails to understand, but I repeat that it is not for sale.

The Liberals and the Nationals are the only people interested in selling Queensland's free hospital system and imposing tough means tests on our free hospitals. Recently, which Premier in Australia was out there pushing for a privatisation aspect to the hospitals system? Richard Court, the Liberal Premier of Western Australia! None of us did. When the conservatives in Australia, including the Liberal Premier of South Australia and the Liberal Premier of Victoria, wanted to sell off public health and impose charges in public hospitals, we held the line. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. My Government rejected that measure just as Cabinet rejected any concept of privatisation options. That is it. The point about all this is very simple—

**Miss Simpson** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** The member has had her chance to whinge. Let us get some facts in all of this. Under the coalition Government, we had the worst handling of Health that has ever been seen in this State. They destroyed the capital works program, elective surgery went backwards and the morale in the health system almost collapsed. We have restored some confidence. That confidence is such that now we have almost 4,000 more elective surgery operations this year compared with the number performed last year. That is a measure of the Government's success. As I said, when the Budget comes down on 14 September, there will be an increase of almost 6%—\$200m.

Today, I was absolutely intrigued to see the Leader of the Opposition issue a news release attacking the announcement that I have made. He does not understand accrual accounting. I have to say that I look forward with some interest to the response to the Budget by the Opposition Leader. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I point out that the main difference between accrual and cash accounting is that, under accrual accounting, revenue is reported when it is earned rather than when it is received; expenditure is reported when it is incurred rather than when it is paid. I know that those are difficult concepts, I know that it is difficult for the Leader of the Opposition to understand all of these things, but this is about getting a decent health system.

This Health Minister has performed. She has demonstrated to the people of this State that this Government is about a decent health system. That is why I am seconding the amendment to this motion, because it reflects accurately the Government's determination to provide a quality health system to all Queenslanders. That is why the Health budget will be going up almost \$200m this year.

I am not going to continue the sort of incompetence that we saw under the previous Government, nor is this Government going to allow the Commonwealth Government—a conservative Government—to short-change nursing homes to the extent of \$50m. This Government is committed to aged care. Only recently, the Minister for Public Works, the Minister for Health and I opened the new Eventide facility at Rockhampton—a facility that was long overdue—to provide nursing home care.

Our record speaks for itself. We are opening new facilities and we are committing ourselves to the future. That is why the new laundries will be built at the Prince Charles and Princess Alexandra

Hospitals at a cost of \$22m. That is 22 million reasons why we are not selling our laundry services. The Minister has made that very clear. So have I.

Recently, the Minister and I opened the new Prince Charles Hospital—a hospital that the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition Health spokesman sought to denigrate. It is a great hospital. The member for Chermside was present at that opening. He has argued strongly for this hospital and, with his representations and the money from this Government, we have delivered.

---